

FIGHTING 'FAKE NEWS'



ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY CUELLAR

Despite recently skyrocketing in popularity, the concept of ‘fake news’ originates from ancient and murky ideals

By **John Bricker**
STAFF WRITER

The meaning of the term “fake news” has changed drastically over time, transforming from a critique of factually inaccurate and sensationalized reporting into a scapegoat for the powerful.

Communication studies professor Andrew Wood, who worked as a broadcast journalist in the U.S. Navy, said the definition of fake news has expanded so much that the term has become almost meaningless.

Communication studies professor Carol-Lynn Perez, who teaches new media classes where she discusses fake news, split fake news into two categories: disinformation and misinformation.

Perez said disinformation spreads inaccurate information with intent to harm, while misinformation popularizes falsehoods due to ignorance.

Fake news can refer to factually inaccurate reporting and writing, Wood said, but it has also “blossomed into a catch-all term” political figures use to discredit information they do not like.

Journalism professor Bob Rucker, who worked for CNN, NBC and Newsweek, criticized the term, calling fake news “more of a corny expression than it is something to take seriously.”

Perez said that fake news is far from a new tactic and that fake news has been around for hundreds of years.

According to Politico, fake news took off directly after Johannes Gutenberg created the first printing press in 1439.

Politico reported that even one of America’s founding founders spread fake news, when Benjamin Franklin popularized stories about violent Native Americans working with King George III.

“

As a term and as a concept, [fake news] is incredibly dangerous to democracy, because it does basically undermine that empirical, fact-based baseline that we are supposed to operate and deal with.

Ted Coopman
communication studies professor

One historical example of fake news is the era of yellow journalism during the 1800s, led by the publications of William Randolph Hearst.

According to History.com, Hearst’s publications heavily catered to their Irish and German readers and spread fear of Asian immigration.

Wood said that yellow journalism publications were more ideologically slanted than modern publications, although both historical and modern publications mainly focused on sensationalism and timeliness rather than political bias.

According to the Public Broadcasting Service, Hearst’s publications and other “yellow” newspapers fueled the public’s hunger for war in 1898 through sensationalized coverage blaming the Spanish for sinking the battleship Maine with no evidence.

Perez said modern fake news during the 2016 election spread more widely than yellow journalism because the internet and social media connect everyone more than ever before.

According to CNNMoney, the town of Veles, North Macedonia is entirely dedicated to manufacturing fake news targeting American readers.

CNNMoney reported that the town gener-

ated false articles spread across 100 websites during 2016 with headlines mostly favoring now-President Donald Trump’s campaign.

Journalism professor Rucker said he hopes fake news will not become an established industry.

“We would be awfully gullible if we allowed that to happen,” he said.

Communication studies professor Ted Coopman, who founded and ran the social media team at SJSU, said he wishes the press would stop using the phrase.

“As a term and as a concept, [fake news] is incredibly dangerous to democracy, because it does basically undermine that empirical, fact-based baseline that we are supposed to operate and deal with,” Coopman said.

Although the public generally uses the term “fake news” to describe politically-motivated bias, SJSU’s communication and journalism experts argued that journalists are much more motivated to hold the attention of their readers than benefit any political party.

Communication studies professor Wood said journalists do not have time to create politically-biased content and that journalists make mistakes when rushing to keep up with the modern, 24-hour news cycle.

“They are biased toward meeting a deadline and producing copy that gets clicks,” he said.

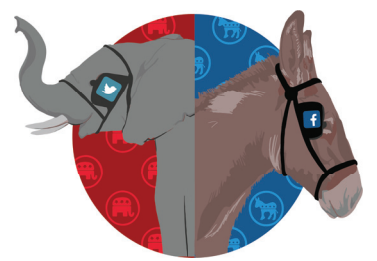
Rucker said traditional publications and networks built up trust over time but that political commentary from networks like Fox News, MSNBC and CNN changed that landscape.

“The internet, strangely enough, is the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to fake news,” he said, citing how the source of information in online articles can often be unclear.

Coopman said that social media often promotes extreme and hyperbolic information, but that Trump is specifically responsible for the modern rhetoric around fake news.

DEFINITION | Page 2

Alternative Sources



Take off your blinders, escape ‘echo chambers’

Page 3

Rumors



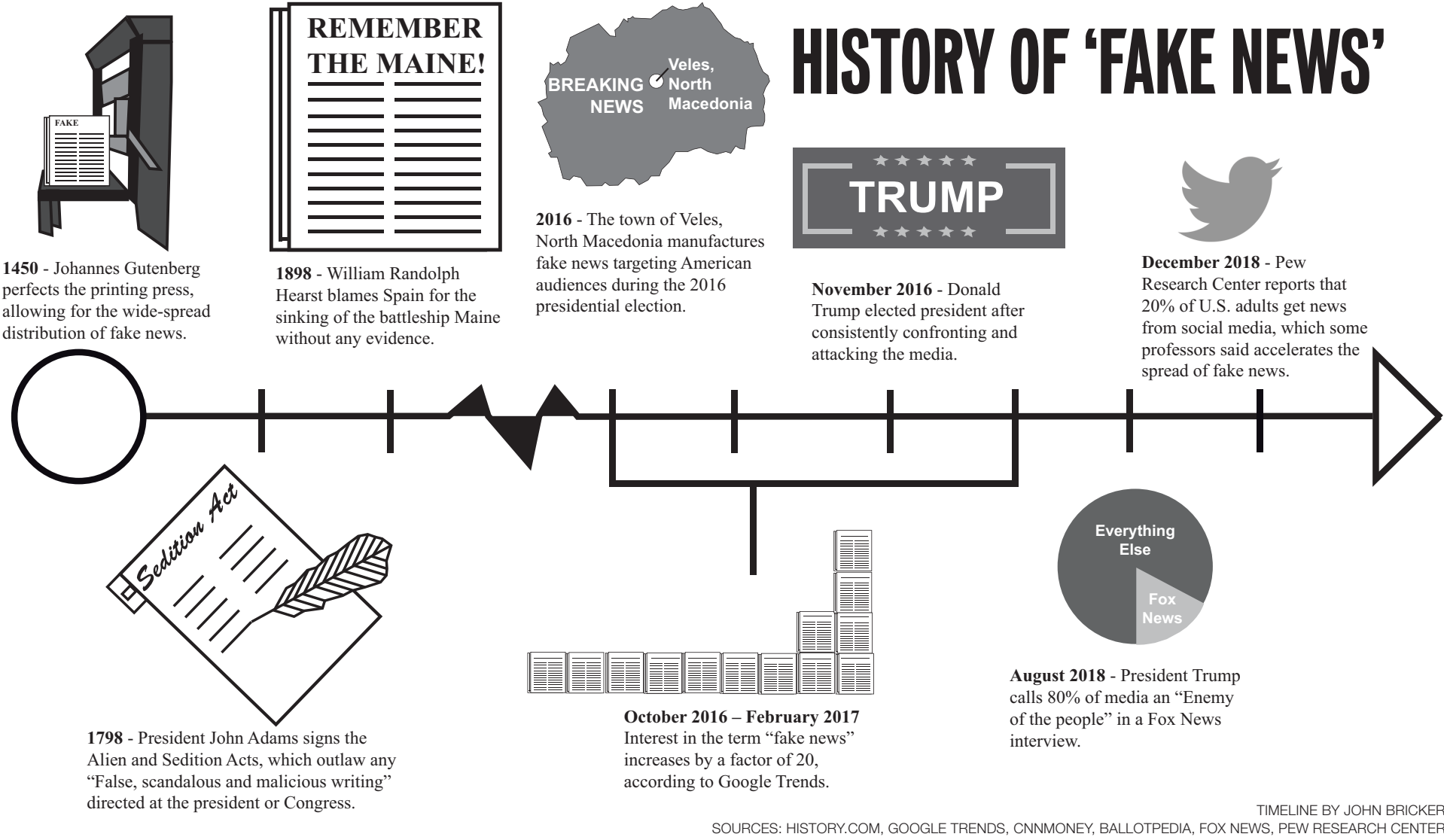
Kevin Durant was going to the Knicks, they said

Page 6

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DEFINITION

Continued from page 1

The term "fake news" did not exist in its modern form before Trump "used it to demean the press and basically undermine that fact-based system," he said.

Interest in fake news increased dramatically after the 2016 presidential election and during Trump's first few months in office.

In an interview with Fox News in August 2018, Trump said 80% of the media are an enemy of the people and that reporters at the New York Times cover him unfairly and are "like lunatics."

Even conservative journalists are learning that Trump is not interested in news, Wood said.

"He is interested in holding on to power," he said.

Trump is not the first president to attack the media.

In 1798, John Adams, the second U.S. president, signed the Alien and Sedition Acts into law, outlawing any "false, scandalous and malicious writing" directed at the president or Congress and prohibits conspiracy "to oppose any measure or measures of the government."

According to History.com, federal courts prosecuted at least 26 people, including newspaper editors who opposed Adams, under the Sedition Act from 1798-1801.

Like many politicians of the past who have battled the media, Trump's fellow candidates in the 2016 presidential election also faced inaccurate coverage.

Perez said all the candidates faced unfair media bias and that she is not sure who benefited from the resulting confusion.

Coopman shared a cynical view of political coverage generally.

"Honestly, it is a fire hose of shit," he said.

SJSU's communication and journalism professors disagreed on whether fake news will become more widespread or if the public will reject it.

Perez said she is not sure if the public critically evaluates the news but she hopes people will become more aware as time goes on.

"The more the people hear the term 'fake news,' the more that I think they will go, 'Huh, well is this real or is it not?'" she said.

Although fake news is an old tool,

Perez said social media is "reinventing the wheel" as more people find more ways to profit off of it.

According to a 2018 Pew Research Center report, one in five adults in the United States said they often get their news through social media, making social media 4% more popular as a news source than newspapers.

Coopman said the central problem social media companies face is trying to keep plausible deniability while adding accountability.

According to the Guardian, Facebook said it chose to not remove misinformation about tax policy during Australia's May federal election because it is not Facebook's role "to remove content that one side of a political debate considers to be false."

Journalism professor Rucker said discussion around fake news may prove to be a fad, but that he hopes the concept will continue to remind the public to fact check.

If students read a little local and national news everyday, Rucker said, they can build their common sense and retain "information to give you a frame of reference later in life."

Wood said students should read from publications that lean toward both political parties.

If you consume a balanced diet of information, Wood said, you are "more likely to have a view of the world that aligns closer to facts outside of opinions."

Follow John on Twitter
@JohnMichaelBr15

Rumors of ICE officers leads to student panic

Unverified tweets stir unrest in undocumented student community

By Vicente Vera
SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR

On the night of March 27, photography senior Nanzi Muro said she was at the Student Union with then-Associated Students President Ariadna Manzo when they read a chilling message.

"ICE is on campus," Muro said. "What do we do?"

Curiosity quickly turned into panic, she said, after reading a post on the SAMMY App that stated Immigration and Customs Enforcement entered San Jose State.

A frequent visitor to the Chicana/Latinx Success Center, Muro texted the student who posted the initial warning to ask for more details.

"She told me it was all false," said Muro. "She told me where she got her info and then said it ended up being a false alarm."

Muro said she did not want to speak for all of the undocumented students on campus, but an alarm such as this one would leave her burdened with anxiety.

The spread of misinformation on college campuses is not a new phenomenon, but the rise of social media allows for disputed rumors to spread among the student body like wildfire.

"It is a new normal," vice president of student affairs Patrick Day said.

"The first time it happened, I remember myself saying, 'Oh no,'" Day said. "You're thinking about how the students are going to react."

Day said that when the potential ICE sightings on campus broke on social media,



This false alarm caused a lot of anxiety within the undocumented community on campus. Students should check with UPD before posting [about ICE].

Ariadna Manzo
then-Associated Students President

SJSU administration immediately sought to verify the account.

The sighting turned out to be inaccurate, to Day's relief.

"Part of our response was a social media post from the university, but we also understand that we shouldn't assume every student is on social media," Day said.

By 8:02 p.m. that same night, vice president of administration and finance Charlie Faas sent out a mass email to all students and faculty verifying that there were no ICE officers on campus and never were.

"Earlier today, misinformation was spread through email and social media about U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity," Faas wrote in the email. "SJSU Police Department (UPD) has verified that there has been no ICE activity on campus."

Manzo told the Spartan Daily in March that friends were texting her throughout



SOURCE: TWITTER

the day, warning her of the later-disputed ICE sightings.

"This false alarm caused a lot of anxiety within the undocumented community on campus," she said. "Students should check with UPD before posting [about ICE]."

After having a more in-depth conversation with the girl who made the original post on the SAMMY App, Muro said the girl told her that another student's outburst in class sparked the rumor.

"[The student] read about ICE in downtown and said it out loud during class," Muro said. "Then people started tweeting about it."

The first tweet was posted at 1:07 p.m.

"ICE is in campus SJSU, stay safe everyone!" read the first tweet of more than a dozen to follow.

"ICE has been spotted on campus at SJSU. Rt and spread the word." The tweets

had hundreds of retweets and likes collectively.

While the rumors were dispelled by the university later that day, there was approximately a seven hour gap between the first tweet and the SJSU administration's response.

Day described the March 27 scare as a learning experience for the university to use for future responses if rumors of alarming activity on campus end up on social media again.

"We're always looking for feedback," Day said. "And we keep thinking about ways to respond and how to be the most effective at reaching students."

Follow Vicente on Twitter
@VicenteSJSU

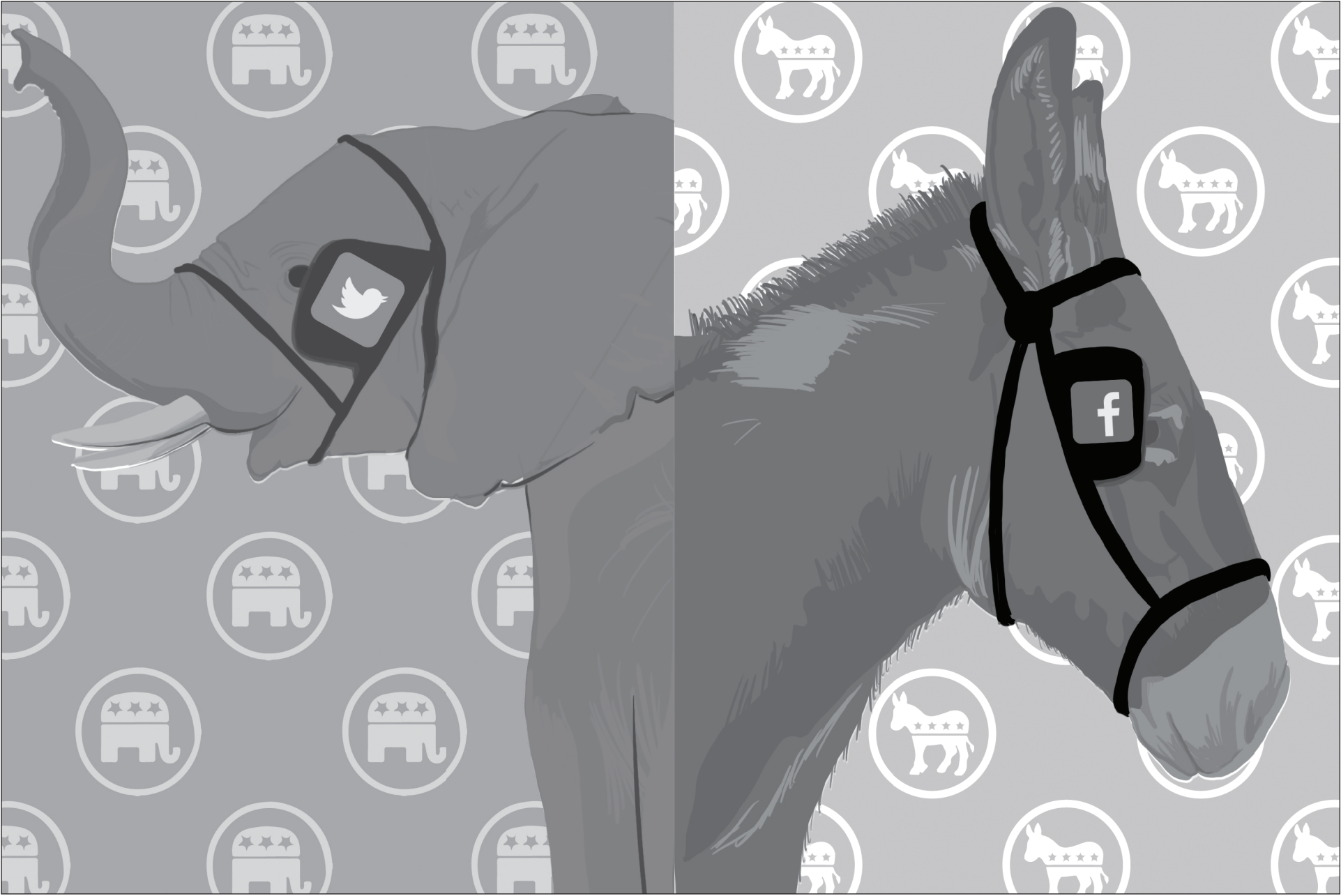


ILLUSTRATION BY MELODY DEL RIO

Step outside your ‘echo chamber’

Information feedback loops trap people into reinforcing confirmation bias

By Christian Trujano
STAFF WRITER

Checking social media platforms is now synonymous with reading news articles for most San Jose State students. Relying on one or two tweets might only reinforce your beliefs, rather than providing unbiased information.

Consumers who follow certain outlets they prefer could echo information that is already consistent with their own agenda. This idea is commonly known as “echo chambers.”

Echo chambers are environments people encounter within others’ beliefs or opinions coincided with their own. Their existing views are reinforced and alternative ideas are not considered.

They operate on confirming your bias, according to a Hoover Institution essay, such as when media news consumers tend to pay more attention to sources and articles that reinforce their views.

Melinda Jackson, political science professor and department chair, said the tendency to believe information that confirms someone’s own views is inherently unavoidable.

“Even if we come across information that goes against our beliefs we may just dismiss it, we may ignore it, we may not even notice it,” Jackson said. “Where as if someone come across information that confirms what we believe, we’re most likely to say, ‘Oh yeah that makes sense, I knew that already.’”

With elections coming up, Jackson said it was important to fact-check the information that doesn’t support one political view so that voters can make informed and unbiased decisions on politicians and their plans.

“We know that our elections are being targeted by people who are actively trying to manipulate voters,” she said.

Whether it’s about gun control, climate change or any other polarizing topic, subjects prefer information that is consistent with their prior political attitudes, according to a

2009 article in the Oxford Academic Journal of Communication.

Design studies senior Robin Klinger said she primarily gets her news from social media. Even though she’d never heard of the term “echo chambers,” she did recognize how the pages she follows on social media reaffirm her own bias.

“I guess [echo chambers] keeps me from seeing the other sides,” Klinger said.

However, Klinger said she sees how the unwillingness to seek out additional information about things could lead to misinformation.

Jackson stressed the idea of fact-checking every source of information and putting in the extra effort of simply doing a web search on the media outlet you got your information from.

“If you follow certain websites or accounts for a certain amount of time you can tell that they’re credible,” Klinger said.

The idea of media literacy and determining which credible sources to believe is a burden people have to deal with, Jackson said.

“It is a really important 21st century skill to just learn how to be a savvy consumer of information,” Jackson said.

According to a preliminary result of a VOX-Pol social media study, consumers formulate political opinions in their media environments and learn to follow their echo chambers.

These formulated opinions rapidly lead people to concentrate on news sources that share their specific political viewpoints, sorting their ideals by these imaginary lines. These are amplified even more during major news events.

“I definitely see a lot of people who don’t change their minds about things no matter what information comes out . . . there is an issue with that,” Klinger said.

In 2017, the American Association for the Advancement of Science published an article about an experiment conducted in the United States to understand how certain news stories influence spikes in polarized public discussion of a specific topic.

The report included 48 mostly-small

media outlets, who wrote and published articles on approved subjects on dates that were randomly assigned.

Discussion increased in each broad policy area by about 63% after each of these articles were published.

The study estimated website pageviews and Twitter discussion of the articles’ specific subjects, and distal ones, such as national Twitter conversation in broad policy areas.

The experiment showed how social media posts increased by almost 20% the first day after the publication of news stories on a wide range of topics. Furthermore, the posts were relatively evenly distributed across political affiliation, gender and region of the United States.

Overall, the experiments revealed large news media effects on the content of the national conversation across 11 important areas of public policy, political party, gender, region and level of social influence.

This represents the importance and substantial increases in national policy discussions on important issues, and how the media causes more people to express themselves publicly on issues that would otherwise be the case.

Junior mechanical engineering major Max Marinovich said he rarely uses social media but sees the same problem with people who rely on their phones for news. He said they get stuck to their existing perspectives and don’t analyze the information.

“Never just take information for what it is, always critique it,” Marinovich said. “Make your own opinions of everything.”

Marinovich said the only way to avoid echo chambers is to look for as many sides of the story as possible.

“Thoroughly look for each specific side of the topic rather than just grabbing the first link or article that you see on it and sticking with that one,” Marinovich said.

However, political science professor Jackson believes it’s not about exposing yourself to every news outlet – it’s about finding sources you trust and researching the source to make sure it’s credible. Even if it is a mainstream outlet.

She said mainstream news doesn’t always have to be associated with “fake news” and explained the difference between being informed and being entertained.

“When you want to be informed, it’s not about being entertained,” Jackson said.

Jackson also said it’s not about the cable or talk shows that just have commentators screaming at each other.

“Avoid the people who are screaming at each other and go for the straight, boring news,” Jackson said.

Environmental studies junior Hayde Gonzalez Lorenzo said she pays attention to TV outlets rather than social media for most news topics.

“I know that some [social media outlets] can be very biased to certain topics,” Gonzalez Lorenzo said. “Though it is news, [social media outlets] are supposed to give out facts, but in reality they just go towards one side instead of giving us a bigger picture of both sides of the problem.”

Jackson wants to teach more people at SJSU tips to avoid getting stuck in these social media echo chambers.

Jackson said she will make sure the political science professors at SJSU emphasize fact-checking in their classrooms.

She said she believes that even though the internet is one of the biggest platforms for spreading misinformation, it’s also one of the best tools in fighting it.

“The internet is just a set of tools that can be used for good or bad purposes and it also makes it easier than ever for you to find good information,” Jackson said.

For students like Gonzalez Lorenzo, fighting against misinformation really depends on the individual to go out of their way to challenge their own opinions.

She said if they don’t make the change they will continue relating to perspectives within their own bias.

“We have to step away from our personal bubble,” Gonzalez Lorenzo said. “It’s all about your mindset.”

Follow Christian on Twitter
@ChristianTruja2



ABOUT

The Spartan Daily prides itself on being the San Jose State community’s top news source. New issues are published every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday throughout the academic year and online content updated daily.

The Spartan Daily is written and published by San Jose State students as an expression of their First Amendment rights.

Reader feedback may be submitted as letters to the editor or online comments.

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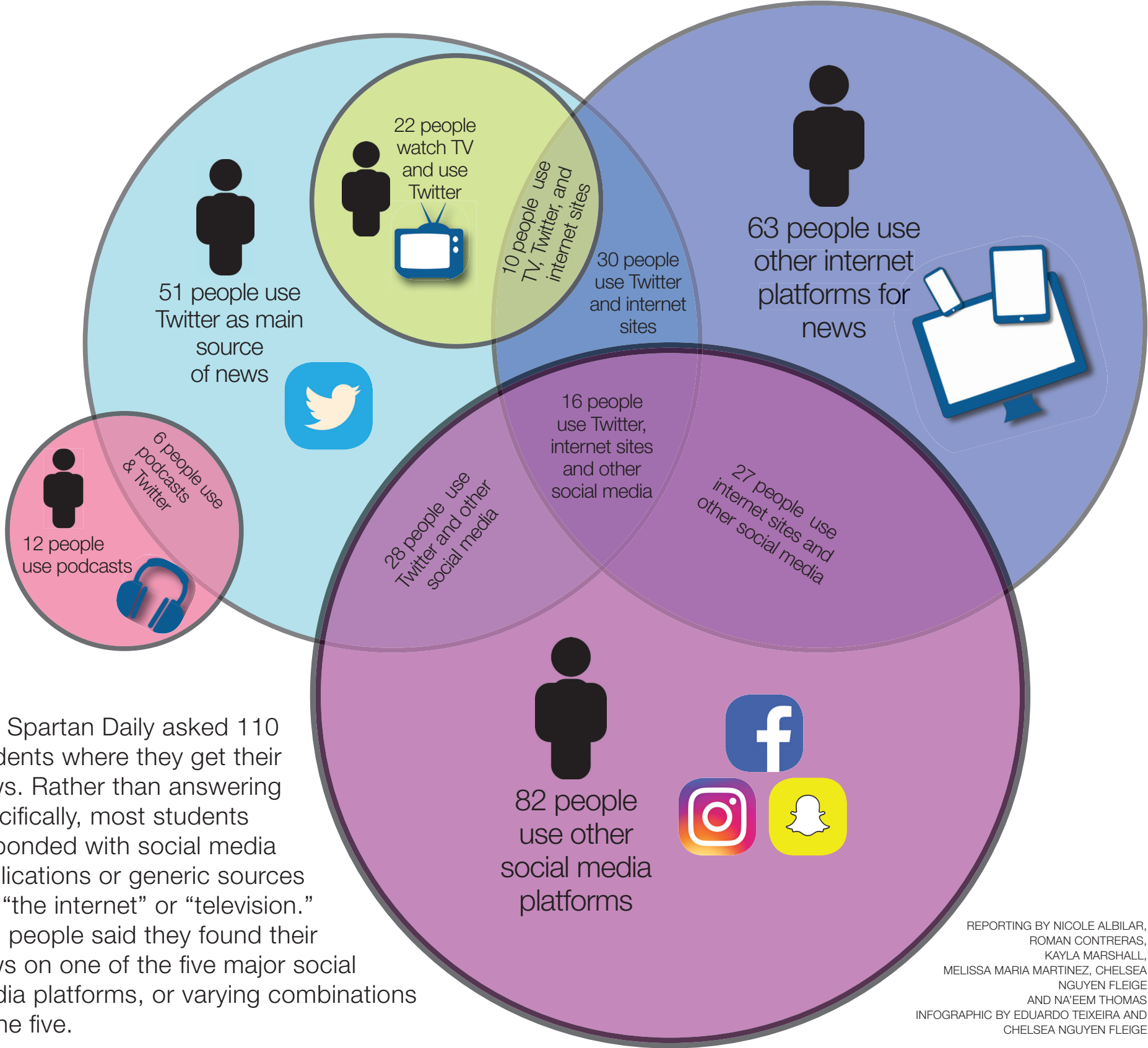
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WHERE DO STUDENTS GET THEIR NEWS?



The Spartan Daily asked 110 students where they get their news. Rather than answering specifically, most students responded with social media applications or generic sources like “the internet” or “television.” 101 people said they found their news on one of the five major social media platforms, or varying combinations of the five.

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AND NA'EEM THOMAS
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CHELSEA NGUYEN FLEIGE

CLASSIFIEDS

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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- ACROSS
1. Neck warmer

6. Tropical American wildcat

10. Sore

14. The quality of being funny

15. Backwards “Boon”

16. Algonquian Indian

17. Small African antelope

18. Chills and fever

19. Phone

20. Stretchability

22. Wicked

23. Explosive

24. Building addition

26. Uttered

30. Agile Old World viverrine

32. Become narrower

33. Helped (British spelling)

37. French for “State”

38. Slash

39. Orderly

40. A large gathering

42. Unemotional

43. Feudal lord

44. A poor city district

45. Mug

47. Ghost’s cry

48. Acted like
49. Famous

56. Ethiopian monetary unit

57. Footnote note

58. Breviloquent

59. Beige

60. Prospector’s find

61. Jagged

62. Squad

63. Winter precipitation

64. Connecting points
- DOWN
1. Sneaker or pump

2. Ringlet

3. Dogfish

4. Steals

5. Spend frivolously

6. Make into law

7. Cartoon bear

8. Defeat decisively

9. Suspension

10. Stress

11. Hunger for

12. Spiral

13. Scream

21. Hotel

25. “The Matrix” hero

26. Flower stalk
27. A Maori club

28. Iridescent gem

29. Tympani

30. Direct the course

31. Behold, in old Rome

33. Strike heavily

34. Violent disturbance

35. Modify

36. A style of design

38. Used in mimeographs

41. 3 in Roman numerals

42. Abridge

44. Mouth (British slang)

45. Seasoning

46. Latin name for our planet

47. Moisten

48. Assist in crime

50. Black, in poetry

51. Adriatic resort

52. Relating to aircraft

53. Stepped

54. Anagram of “Sees”

55. D D D D

SUDOKU PUZZLE

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

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SOLUTIONS 10/02/2019

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3	7	2	4	1	9	6	8	5
5	1	4	6	8	2	7	9	3
9	6	8	5	7	3	2	4	1

JOKIN’ AROUND

What did the skeleton say to the vampire?

You suck.

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CAMPUS VOICES

REPORTING BY ROMAN CONTRERAS

“I want my sources to be reliable.”

Elise Freche
nutritional science graduate student

“Just knowing the intent behind why they’re sharing that information.”

Danielle Osprey
global studies senior

I notice a lot of news sources do not give accurate scientific information.

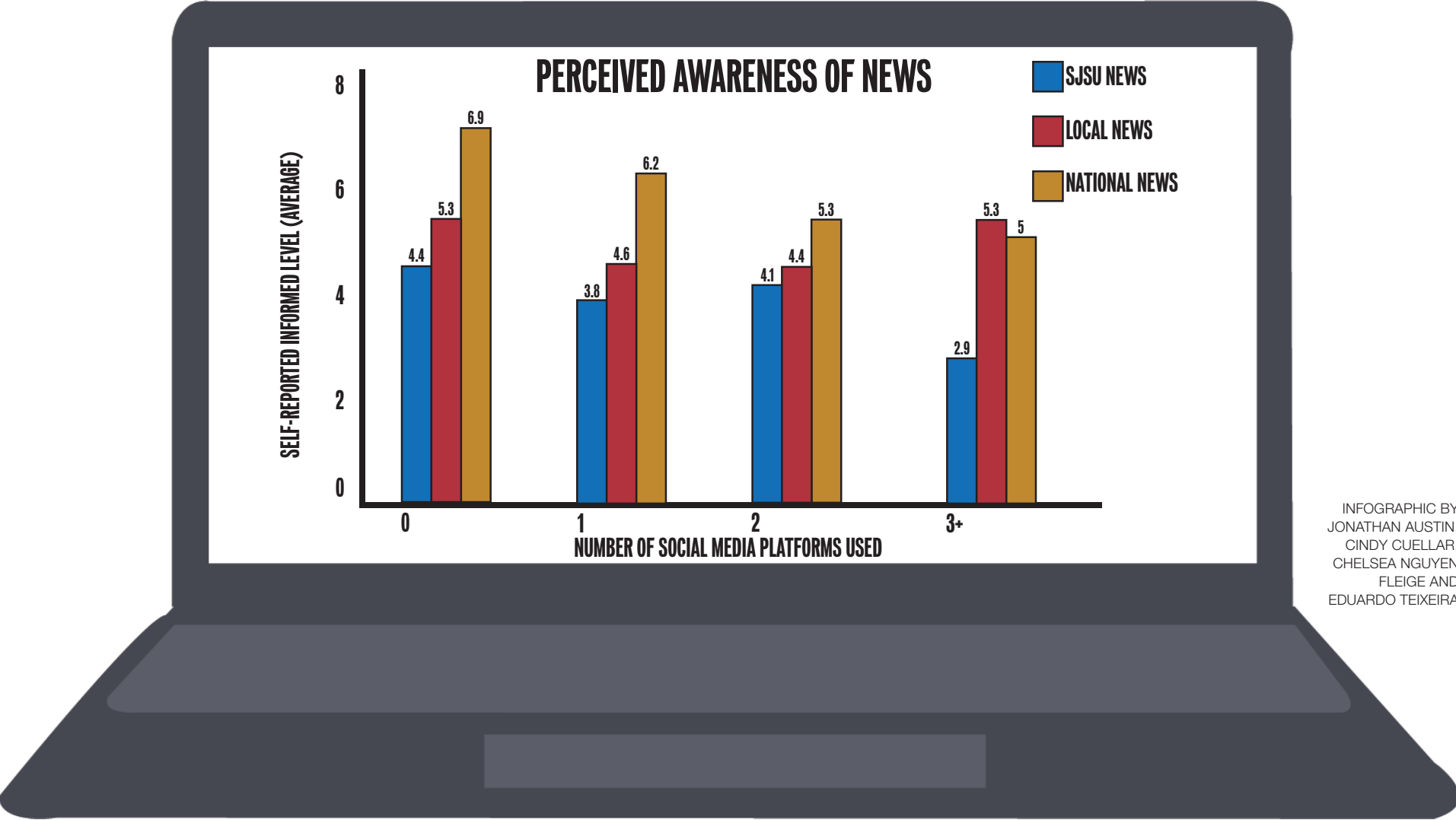
Alexandra Salazar
molecular biology senior


“I think people tell you what they want you to hear, or believe and they want you to believe that.”

Sam Kalb
nutritional science graduate student

DO YOU THINK IT MATTERS WHERE YOU GET YOUR NEWS?

The Spartan Daily asked 110 people how informed they felt about three areas of news, on a scale of 1 - 10. The people were grouped by the number of social media platforms on which they read news media and averaged the numbers.






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SPARTAN DAILY’S GUIDE TO FIGHTING ‘FAKE NEWS’



IDENTIFY SOURCES

The first step in avoiding “fake news” and misinformation is to know where your news is coming from. Many students get their news from social media, some of which may come from established news outlets, but plenty more could come from biased pages or accounts of unverified news sources trying to push a specific viewpoint. Knowing where your news is coming from helps you evaluate how much you should trust that information.



FIND OPPOSING VIEWS

If the news you’re reading fits your viewpoint on an issue exactly and does not raise questions about the opposite side, you may be stuck in an “echo chamber.” It’s important to have a balance of content, not just a single point of view. While not every issue necessarily has two different sides, it is still important to look critically at why detractors may disagree with a certain topic.



PROMOTE BEST PRACTICES

When you see a friend, family member or classmate spreading news from an unreliable source, call them out on it. Let them know why it is unacceptable to spread unsubstantiated rumors from unreliable sources. This helps them and all the people who share their content to build up critical media literacy skills. Pass on credible news through your social media to overpower problematic content.

Media and athletes race to be first

By **Brendan Cross**
STAFF WRITER

In any form of media, but particularly in the world of sports journalism, the need to be the first to break a story reigns supreme.

The advent and constant growth of social media platforms such as Twitter have provided people, professional journalists or otherwise, a place to spread news, accurate or not.

While sports media still acts as a bridge of information from the athlete to the fan, the modern professional athlete also has multiple avenues available to them to promote their brand and tell their story.

This has created a landscape where being first and getting clicks means more than the truth, in some circles.

Connor Letourneau, Golden State Warriors beat writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, said he has seen the problem of “fake news” proliferate into sports media.

“We live in a world where everyone is trying to be first,” Letourneau said. “A lot of times that leads to people not double-checking their sources . . . and they end up putting out information that’s not accurate. I see that on an almost daily basis.”

Fake news in sports, which is to say stories that have been born out of a fabricated quote or event, are not as rampant as someone on Twitter blatantly creating a trade rumor out of thin air, but there are some examples out there.

Sports and politics fused in the NFL when some athletes protested during the national anthem, which hit its boiling point during the 2017 season.

A website called TheLastLineofDefense.org published a story titled, “BREAKING: Fox Sports Cancels ALL NFL Broadcasts ‘Until Players Respect the Flag.’”

This of course, did not happen, as Fox continued to show every football game as scheduled. The story then went on to quote a fictional Fox spokesperson

that supposedly made the announcement on a different Fox program.

The website, which claimed its content was satirical in a disclaimer, is now defunct.

Tracking sources

One way a rumor can spread to the point of it being believed by the masses is when someone with real industry acumen gets involved.

In late 2016, an NBA rumor spread that Warriors shooting guard Klay Thompson was supposedly involved in trade talks with the Boston Celtics.

The story originated on a website called the Morning Ledger but spread after former Celtic power forward Brian Scalabrine raised it on an NBA satellite radio show.

On the show, Scalabrine said, “By the way, this weekend I heard that Klay Thompson might be available.” He failed to identify a source while on-air but later tweeted that he got his information from the Morning Ledger article.

People thought it had legitimacy because someone who played in the NBA and had ties with the Celtics organization spread the rumor.

Warriors head coach Steve Kerr even addressed the rumor at a press conference later that same day. He mostly laughed it off, but in the span of a weekend, a completely falsified rumor made its way to the head coach of a professional franchise.

“NBA Twitter is kind of an infamous thing, there is a lot of speculating that goes on and a lot of rushing to judgment,” Letourneau said. “That can lead to misinformation and rumors that aren’t accurate.”

This kind of rumor can cause distrust among professional athletes and the media that cover them.

“It can make players a lot more wary of the media, less trustworthy of the media and not feeling like they are credible,” Letourneau said.

Durant rumors

In February, free agency rumors were swirling around then-Warrior power forward Kevin Durant that culminated in a back-



NBA Twitter is kind of an infamous thing, there is a lot of speculating that goes on and a lot of rushing to judgment.

Connor Letourneau
San Francisco Chronicle
Warriors beat writer

and-forth with media at a press conference.

While Durant was not opening up about his free agency plans, media organizations knew the gravity of his eventual decision.

“We know that a player of his caliber changing teams changes the league by so much,” Mercury News digital sports strategist Michael Nowels said. “We see an [then-ESPN reporter] Ian Begley tweet that [says Durant] is considering going to the Knicks, we say ‘We gotta write that.’”

Nowels said that he and the rest of the reporters at the Mercury News have to walk a fine line between giving fans the news they want versus making sure that news is credible.

Grant Cohn, sports columnist for the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, wrote a piece in April that called for Durant to leave town.

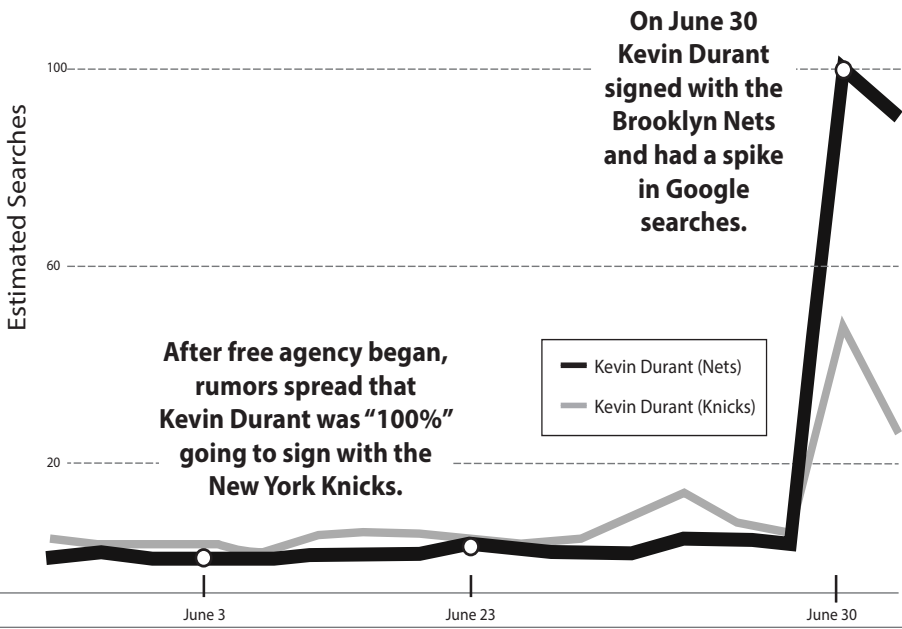
“He’d come into post-game press conferences with his hat pulled low and a frown on his face like he wanted to be on any other team,” Cohn said. “I couldn’t admire it.”

Most NBA talking heads were convinced that Durant was headed to the New York Knicks, as this Bleacher Report headline from May suggests: “[Colin] Cowherd: ‘Very Connected’ NBA Player Says Kevin Durant to Knicks Is ‘100% Done.’”

Cohn, however, was not convinced.

He thought that it was possible that Durant was toying with the media, fully

NBA FANS FALL PREY TO RUMORS



knowing what team he wanted to play for all along despite the constant rumors that he was a shoe-in for the Knicks.

Durant eventually signed with the Brooklyn Nets.

While Cohn never heard from Durant in regards to his opinion piece, he knows that most players he writes about will see his work.

Sports personnel react

In the sports media world, it’s not uncommon for athletes to not like what a journalist has to say, even if it’s factual.

Cam Inman, 49ers reporter for the Mercury News, also said that he’s not going to please everyone that he writes about, otherwise it would essentially be public relations.

“Athletes and coaches respect your opinion if you take a credible stance based on an educated thought rather than a ‘hot take,’” Inman said in an email.

During one of his first years covering the team, Inman said that Jeremy Newberry, former 49ers center, was upset with something he wrote about him.

Inman approached Newberry and asked him why, and Newberry told him that he heard second-hand that Inman “ripped” him in a story.

The article actually said that a holding penalty by Newberry nullified a touchdown run, without anything specifically accusatory in it.

“[Newberry] agreed he should have read it himself and he had no qualms with me going forward, partly because I told him I’m always open to discussing such concerns in a quest for factual reporting,” Inman said.

While covering Oregon State athletics for The Oregonian, Letourneau had a similar run-in, but this time with a coach.

“I reported that the head coach, who is actually [President] Barack Obama’s brother-in-law, was going to get fired,” Letourneau said. “I broke that he was going to get fired before he was even notified.”

Naturally, the head coach was angry with Letourneau, and he blackballed him at press conferences, barred all media from practice, and attacked his credibility and character publicly.

The head coach was eventually fired, but it didn’t come until a week after the report.

“There have been plenty of times where I will write or say something that will upset a player or a coach,” Letourneau said. “It’s not

information that they wanted to be public, but it is my job to report the news, so that comes with the territory.”

The media, of course, is a two-sided coin, with players and coaches having their own opinions about how the media covers teams.

San Jose State women’s soccer head coach Lauren Hanson said her experience with the media has been positive thus far in both her playing and coaching career.

Hanson also said there are pros and cons with how sports media covers teams since the news cycle sped up.

“I think it’s positive in the sense that there’s more media coverage,” Hanson said. “Unfortunately, sometimes doing their research and fact-checking and making sure that there’s two sides of the story told isn’t a priority I think, especially with social media.”

Whether it’s a tweet that wasn’t checked for accuracy or a story that is completely falsified, the landscape of sports journalism has changed. Real sports reporting still exists, but it has to fight through heaps of misinformation to rise to the top.

Follow Brendan on Twitter | @BrendanCross93

Deepfakes: Just another political tool



Olivia Wray
STAFF WRITER

Photos can easily be transformed with a few tricks in Photoshop, but it has become apparent that videos are being manipulated to the point where it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish fake from reality.

Altered videos, known as deepfakes, are an illusion for anyone who watches news clips online, which is a problem forcing people to be more cautious of how they view politicians.

Jeff Pegues of CBS News reported U.S. intelligence officials are warning everyone that deepfakes may be used to influence campaigns in the 2020 elections.

“The most standard one is to take an image or a video of a person – candidate or president – and alter it to make it look like they are saying something that they never said,” Hany Farid, UC Berkeley electrical engineering and computer science professor, told CBS News in an interview on May 25.

Farid explained the editing phenomenon is accessible to anyone with the correct software, meaning any video someone watches could possibly be altered.

“What if somebody creates a video of President [Donald] Trump saying ‘I’ve launched nuclear weapons against Iran, or North Korea, or Russia,’ and we don’t have hours or days to figure out if it’s real or not?” Farid said.

It’s a problem to have these videos out in public for millions to see, but it’s even worse that they are being left on social platforms for people to keep sharing.

Facebook and Microsoft are working together to encourage better ways to discover the masqueraded videos in the Deepfake Detection Challenge, according to a Reuters article.

Facebook is putting \$10 million toward commissioning researchers to make realistic deepfakes that will hopefully result in a data set for testing detection tools.

If the tech is available to alter videos, then companies like Facebook should be expected to act fast and use artificial intelligence technology to prevent further problems.

The issue with deepfakes started when Trump tweeted an edited video of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on May 23 that made it sound like Pelosi was stuttering her words during a news conference.

The day after the altered video was posted, it racked up 2.4 million views on Facebook and was shared 47,000 times, according to USA Today.

Pelosi expressed concern for Trump’s “well-being” while he called her a “mess,” USA Today reported. Trump also said that Pelosi was “disintegrating.”

It is clear already that the deepfakes phenomenon is causing more unnecessary drama in U.S. politics.

It is already clear that the deepfakes phenomenon is causing more unnecessary drama in U.S. politics.

A Wired article, an AI system can detect if something has changed to a clip from something familiar, such as a movie, but it’s more difficult for the system to recognize an original video that is altered.

“One big challenge for deepfake researchers is that, as with all AI work, researchers need numerous examples of deepfakes in order to ‘train’ a system to spot doctored videos,” according to the Wired article.

The Deepfake Detection Challenge will help researchers come up with ways to make it harder to spread altered videos.

According to Wired, “The idea isn’t to create a system that will stop all deepfakes forever.”

What does this mean for the upcoming election?

The goal for researchers is to minimize the threat of deepfakes before the campaigns start, but it seems the U.S. political system is making it increasingly difficult for Americans to see the truth in the government.

UC Berkeley professor Farid said to the Washington Post, “It’s striking that such a simple manipulation can be so effective and believable to some.”

Simple alterations to videos of leaders going viral can easily change Americans’ views and make people paranoid, always contemplating if they are being led astray.

The paranoia that deepfakes are creating for people is a cunning tactic that adds to the already-divided democracy.

It is unfair that we can’t trust politicians of our country during the only time we can rightfully vote for the change we want to see.

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Please realize satire is intentionally fake



Jonathan Austin
OPINION EDITOR

It may be hard to understand for some folks but hear me out – not everything you read on the internet is true or meant to be thought of as true.

Satire allows for social criticism through humor and has developed into a thriving medium for publications on the internet.

Satire is, without a doubt, a useful tool in the modern world.

It helps to point out flaws in general life and society through myriad tools, mainly irony and sarcasm.

It also forces people to legitimately think about what they are consuming through juxtaposition of ideas.

Good satire uses strong evocative language that allows for the transmission of those ideas through language.

It is no myth the bulk of our knowledge is transmitted either by oral or written language.

The problem occurs when the line gets blurred between reality and satire causing confusion about the words intended meaning.

Spoken word provides context clues, such as mood and tonal clues to enhance meaning in dialogue.

With written words, the need to convey tone and expression can be a much harder challenge.

The inability to display tonal clues and speech emphasis to convey a point is a crucial inability.

We’ve reached the point where legitimate news headlines jump out and read as satire – except they’re not.

“Black security guard who stops shooter is then shot and killed by police,” is a legitimate headline from a real newspaper. The Hill reported on a real shooting involving an actual Chicago security guard who was then shot by the aforementioned real cops in November 2018.

To contrast, The Onion, a satirical news publication, writes in an objectively inflammatory way about real topics that actually happened in an attempt to have people think about how we live as a society.

To highlight the uniquely American preoccupation with gun ownership, The Onion puts out a copy-pasted article with updated events and numbers every time there is a mass shooting in the U.S. titled, “ ‘No Way To Prevent This,’ Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens.”

Sure, there are lighter subjects touched upon by The Onion, but satire’s intended purpose is to provoke thought.

Maybe that’s the problem, people don’t like thinking about the who, what, when, where and why of the information they are consuming. Instead they look for the most readily available source of intel to generate their world views.

Then suddenly they stumble upon a satirical news piece that confirms their preexisting biases and then they read it share it and move along.

All the while not realizing it’s satire that’s mocking their views.

We don’t need less satire in the news, we need smarter people with better media literacy to be able to identify real journalism by credible reporters for legitimate news organisations.

One of the unfortunate issues facing today’s journalism world is the abundance of media conglomerates that own large groups of separate entities may cause confusion between real journalism and fake journalism.

That is not the fault of the publications however, because personal accountability must be had in order to function and thrive in daily life anyway.

Otherwise we will be shifting around in a nebulous stream of dysfunctional information.

Follow Jonathan on Twitter
@JonathanAus10

JOURNALISTS' TOP PRIORITY

ACCURACY

SPEED

ILLUSTRATION BY MELODY DEL RIO

Mistakes occur, own up to them to fight 'fake news'

Throughout the course of history, societies have revolved around being able to properly inform the masses.

The world relies on journalism, which has been at the forefront of that process since Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press.

The common people require a watchdog to hold those in power accountable.

Journalists are trusted and expected to investigate politicians, CEOs and anyone else with an undue influence upon the world.

Emphasized in movies like "All the President's Men" and "Spotlight," scrappy journalists find out the truth and tell the entire world about the corruption and cover-ups they discover.

That is how it's supposed to work. At least, in theory.

Today the journalists face a much more pervasive problem – there is seemingly little self-regulation within the media to hold itself accountable.

Media companies have merged into massive conglomerates, some of which became the holders of undue power they once swore to hold accountable.

This creates another destructive issue facing the masses.

People in positions of power use the term "fake news" as a slur against journalists – to demonize and discredit hard-working journalists trying to discover wrongdoing.

The term has been weaponized against the media to justify physical attacks on reporters – to intimidate those who want to report on issues they believe the people must know.

However, reporters can still make mistakes in their effort to spread information of public interest.

There is a line between malicious "fake news" and inaccuracies made from human error.

According to a 2005 study conducted by University of Oregon journalism professor Scott Maier, 61% of randomly selected news stories across 14 newspapers contained factual errors in them.

That is not acceptable.

In the world of journalism, our accuracy is our credibility.

Every mistake we make collectively, the more credibility we lose.

However corrections, offer news organizations a path to redemption.

To be clear, once a mistake is published for the people to see, it never goes away.

That is why journalists must strive to offer up 100% correct and accurate information for their audiences.

Corrections at least give journalists an opportunity to redeem some of the credibility lost from mistakes in reporting.

That involves the prerequisite that journalists actually publish those corrections.

In the aforementioned study, 97% of errors went uncorrected.

No doubt, it is embarrassing for anyone to admit they made a mistake. This is especially true in journalism, where reporters pride themselves on their ability to produce accurate details to their audiences.

Corrections are an opportunity for us to prove that ultimately, our top priority is accuracy.

This semester, the Spartan Daily adopted a new correction policy: we will correct every single factual error or misleading statement that is brought to our attention – or those that we find ourselves.

After 17 publications, the current Spartan Daily Editorial Board has issued 11 corrections for 175 stories. That estimates to about 6% of stories with known errors.

But just looking at stories alone doesn't tell the full story, as the media landscape has changed a bit since the study was conducted in 2005 – namely the rise of social media.

Different platforms provide a quick and convenient way for journalists to spread information.

It also makes it just as easy to spread misinformation and hearsay.

With a high demand to feed social media users information as fast as possible, reporters rush to post the latest on breaking news stories with no editorial oversight, which can lead to false information being passed on as a fact.

Just like in any other medium, mistakes happen, and corrections are needed to right those journalistic wrongs.

But even though reporters can update online stories or issue corrections for print publications, there is no way to issue a correction on some applications like Twitter.

You can send out another tweet correcting the old one, but there's no guarantee that the people who saw the incorrect tweet will see the new one.

The Spartan Daily aims to avoid spreading incorrect tweets by having staff writers post using their own accounts, with the main @SpartanDaily account retweeting them, if they pass editorial review.

It's not a perfect system, as even editors are fallible, but this provides an additional layer of caution and responsibility.

While journalists get attacked for being "fake news," it's partly upon us, the news media, to rise above the term itself.

All the while, reporters are shifting how they are doing their jobs.

It is not uncommon to see a story posted online with little fact-based information other than basic details provided as truth, which then later is edited and changed to be less misleading.

To be real news, journalists need to ensure accuracy at all costs.

That means, as long as we get the information correct, even if that means we break a story second, our story was a success.

If we're a day late in publishing need-to-know information to our readers but provided factually accurate details, we did our jobs correctly.

As student journalists, we must hold our positions with pride and serve the readers of the Spartan Daily with accurate news.

Conversely, when we get things wrong and make mistakes we must learn from them, and most importantly correct them.

Anything less would be a disservice to not only our readers, but ourselves as well.

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Correction

On Wednesday, Oct. 2, the Spartan Daily published a story titled, "How do you feel about applying for graduation, knowing your time at SJSU may end soon?," in which Angelina Perez should have been listed as a psychology senior.

The Spartan Daily regrets this error.

